

# Commission on The Status of Women - 1999

Position Papers & Club Activities

Soroptimist



International

A Global Voice For Women



# Soroptimist International

## A Message from the International President

As Nations of the world prepare for the 43<sup>rd</sup> session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, in March 1999 Soroptimists in 115 countries urge governments to intensify their efforts and actions on WOMEN AND HEALTH to achieve the goals of the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women* and the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*.

Women's and girl's health involve their emotional, social and physical well-being. It is determined by the social, environmental, political and economic context of their lives as well as by biology. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is vital for the life and well-being of women and girls. It is also crucial to their ability to participate in all areas of public and private life. The prevalence among women of poverty and economic dependence, their experience of violence, negative attitudes towards them, lack of food and inequitable distribution of food in the household, inadequate access to safe water, sanitation facilities and fuel supplies all overburden women and their families and have a negative effect on their health.

Soroptimist International calls for action NOW to:

- increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality healthcare, information and related services
- undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health issues.
- strengthen preventative programmes that promote women's health
- increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health
- eliminate discrimination against women and girls in health and nutrition

Soroptimist International reaffirms its commitment to the *Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies* and the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action*. As women helping women, Soroptimist International seeks partnership at local, national, and international levels. We welcome opportunities for interaction and collaboration. The following statements and members activities within our health programme worldwide give some examples of our commitment as we strive for

Human Rights for All

The Advancement of the Status of Women

Equality, Development and Peace

through International Goodwill and Understanding; and Friendship

Mary Page

President

International

March 1999

### Front Cover Artwork:

Soroptimist International is grateful to Susret-Art Workshop for the artwork created by Bosnian refugee women in Austrian exile. Project self-support of Interior Design. The works from Susret Workshop are currently on display at the Soroptimist International Library and Documentation Unit.

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**S**oroptimist International is a Global Voice for Women with women in over 115 countries working through AWARENESS, ADVOCACY and ACTION.

A worldwide organization for women in management and the professions, Soroptimist International strives for Human Rights for All, Advancement of the Status of Women, Equality, Development and Peace through International Goodwill and Understanding and Friendship.

Soroptimist International is committed to service to local, national and international communities and active participation in decision-making at all levels of society.

Soroptimist International encourages all members to be aware of and involved in the issues of society, but it is non-party political and non-sectarian.

Soroptimist International holds General Consultative Status with ECOSOC, Official Relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), and has representation at United Nations Centers in New York, Paris, Geneva and Vienna with United Nations Agencies which have granted the organization recognized status as an international non-governmental organization.

Soroptimist International, a truly global voice, submits the following statements:

**Section 1:**

Examples of Soroptimist club, region/union, federation activities in alphabetical order

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**Section 1:**  
**Soroptimist International**  
**'Women & Health' Club Activities**

**SI**  
**Asaba,**  
**Nigeria**

Club members embarked on a project to provide and install mosquito nets on the doors, windows and balconies of the Asaba General Hospital. These measures were taken after a member noticed that the hospital premises were infested with flies and mosquitoes. The initiative is effecting in promoting a healthier lifestyle by the betterment of sanitary measures. It drew the problem to the attention of the state government which has also been advised to ensure that the premises do not get overgrown with grass and that the dumping of refuse should be discouraged. SI monitors the implementation of these measures on an ongoing basis.

**SI**  
**Bendigo,**  
**Victoria**  
**Australia**

Financial assistance was made to the Bendigo Health Care Group to conduct a "Look Good, Feel Good Programme", to assist women with cancer adjust to their new appearance. Wigs, make-up and accessories are supplied to women at either no cost or a minimal charge.

**SI**  
**Bacolod City,**  
**Philippines**

Clean and Green Programme. Began during an outbreak of Dengue fever. The initial activity has been to educate residents in the programme, to clear drainage water, a breeding ground for mosquitoes and proper disposal of garbage.

**SI Bonaberi,**  
**Cameroon**

Baby Friendly Project project resulted from an awareness of an increase in the number of women who had turned to bottle feeding, their difficulty in affording imported baby food and the increase in tuberculosis. Previously the tuberculosis vaccine (BCG) had been provided free. The club arranged for educational talks on breast feeding and the preparation of low cost nutritious baby foods from local maize, soy etc. twice a week as part of the ante and postnatal visits. The vaccinations and information on TB were well publicized by radio and through programmes at various women's groups. They were unable to keep up with the demand for vaccinations, due to the cost even though they were assisted by the donation of stg 500 from the Region of Northern England. They vaccinated over 1,000 children. In support, the Public Health Unit offered free polio vaccinations for the very young children. The project is ongoing and the club intends to solicit funds for as many vaccines as possible so that they can continue the immunization portion of the project.

**SI**  
**Blackburn,**  
**England**

supports the Life Education Trust, an initiative to set up a health education programme for primary school children. It works by means of a 'caravan' equipped with high tech teaching aids and well trained educators to tell children about the wonder of life and health and the effects of drugs.





**Section 1:**  
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<b>SI Bradford, United Kingdom</b>	Drug Watch In Schools: Global trends show increased abuse of drugs, narcotics and other substances particularly by youth. A pilot Initiative implemented a drugs awareness programme in local schools. Three schools in the pilot area reached an award standard in 1996. Assessors included Soroptimist members, Rotarians and local Justices all who received training and were recognized by the Director of Education. The program is now being developed over a wider area. A charter will be awarded to schools who successfully achieve the standards, renewable on an annual basis following assessment.	<b>SI/ Cambridge, Ontario Canada</b>	Club established a Breastfeeding Support Site in April 1997, in partnership with the local health department. The Site, centrally located in a shopping mall, provides breastfeeding support by health care and lactation professionals in a private, comfortable space, seven days a week. New and expectant mothers can obtain teaching and counseling on the health benefits of breastfeeding their infants at the Site; they can also receive additional educational materials about infant care, and participate in a breastfeeding peer support group.
<b>SI Brno, Czech Republic</b>	Provided a series of lectures on the prevention factors needed to sustain good health.		By establishing the Breastfeeding Support Site, the club hopes to increase public awareness about the importance of breastfeeding to maternal and infant health. In doing so, they are promoting the World Health Organization's guidelines of infant breastfeeding (exclusively) through 6 months of age, and supplementary breastfeeding until 2 years of age. Women discontinue breastfeeding, or never begin, for many reasons, including lack of professional support, an inability to cope with early breastfeeding difficulties, insufficient social support, and not least, lack of information about the importance of breastfeeding to the health of their children, as well as their own.
<b>SI Burdwan, India</b>	The Day Care and Vocational Training Centre set up by the Club offers not only free education, but also free medical and health care.		
<b>SI Byzantio, Greece</b>	The club edited a series of booklets giving patients and their relatives information about nutrition, radiotherapy, chemotherapy and hair care.		
<b>SI Cairo, Egypt</b>	developed a project to increase awareness of university students to the AIDS infection. The Faculty of Tourism at the University of Helwan supported the project and the lectures, workshops and discussions were held on campus. The Dean of the Faculty attended plus six students of both sexes. In the street in front of the Faculty a big balloon covered in information on AIDS was suspended. Because of the success of this project, additional workshops are being planned.	<b>SI Canning Districts, Western Australia</b>	continued support for local cerebral palsy girl, modification to wheel chair to enable her to hold her head up, which is assisting her progress through school, to be happier and increasing her verbal ability.
		<b>SI Cockermouth England</b>	organized a local community Health Forum about osteoporosis and its consequences for women.





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(11/98)

## **BALLOONS FOR LIFE**

### **1998-2000 Federation Project**

Balloons for Life takes its name from the infusofeed Balloon; a simple, cost-effective device for oral rehydration and controlled nutrition.

Members of clubs throughout the Federation are encouraged to support this project in a number of ways:

- raising money for the project
- identifying areas of need and use for the device within their own communities
- researching the necessary procedures and regulations in each country for official endorsement of such new medical devices and procedures.

### **What is the infusofeed balloon?**

Infusofeed is a new, simple and cost-effective way of treating malnutrition and dehydration, the major killers of children in developing countries.

The device consists of a silicon balloon with a one-way flow control valve which attaches to a nasogastric tube, the pressure of the contracting balloon infusing an accurate amount of life-saving nutrients or fluids to the sick child. It operates without power and is totally portable, allowing both mother and child freedom of movement. Nurses can change the Balloon at night without disturbing the young patient's sleep, reducing trauma – an important factor in recovery.

The infusofeed balloon is a reusable product. Nasogastric therapy is not a sterile procedure and the Balloon can be cleaned in the same way that babies' bottles are cleaned. It is estimated that one balloon could be used as many as fifty times. This reduces the already low costs of the balloons. One kit can serve a whole village—some children may only need the Balloon for a day or two, others for several weeks; but, being durable and reusable and complete with its own sterilisation kit, the Balloons can go from family to family.

Physicians from the Children's Hospital in Perth and the University of Western Australia are available to "train the trainer" in areas of need. A training video on the use of the Balloon is currently being produced.

Through Soroptimists contact has already been made with the medical staff on Palm Island where it is hoped they will start using Balloons there very soon.

Partnerships with other NGOs are being sought to provide support



**Section 1:**  
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<b>SI Colfax, California, USA</b>	has sponsored a women's health fair for the past 2 years, providing on-site screening for high blood pressure,, respiratory disease, and diabetes, as well as information on good nutrition, breast self-exams and mammography, menopause, and osteoporosis. Information about domestic violence, sexual assault, and alcohol/drug addiction was also presented. Participants in the programme ranged from teens to older women.	<b>SI Enugu, Nigeria</b>	members are involved in the translation of pamphlets on AIDS into native languages and are also continuing to offer AIDS education and awareness in secondary schools
<b>SI Dhaka, Bangladesh</b>	Safe Motherhood: The project began in 1992. The target group of this project is a group of approximately 60 mothers from Noyatola slum area. Now, we observe encouraging result regarding the health of mothers during natal and post-natal period including their alertness in the field of family planning and rearing of their children. Beside our member doctors, this year we have appointed a gynaecologist on payment basis to look after the project.	<b>SI Fairview, Philippines</b>	
<b>SI Doyen, Egypt</b>	The two clubs working in partnership have begun to make young factory girls more knowledgeable about the dangers of female genital mutilation. They hope to change the decisions of the family about this practice.	<b>SI Flagstaff, Arizona, USA</b>	has funded diagnostic mammograms for low-income women for the last three years. The number of women served has grown to between 20-30 each year.
<b>SI Luxembourg, Luxembourg</b>		<b>SI French Union, France</b>	Clubs have advocated for and received urban wasteland in deprived city areas to create city farms and play areas to ensure children's safety.
<b>SI Dresden, Germany</b>	Provided financial aid to enable patients addicted to drugs and alcohol to be rehabilitated in the community. They also visit the addicts during their treatment and purchase their crafts.	<b>SI French Union, France</b>	National Anti-noise Campaign is a long-term campaign working in partnership between schools, local and national authorities and the police. Workshops, seminars, contests, expositions, and distribution of sonometers were successful. Distribution of ancient musical instruments and music records provided therapeutic value. Recognition of the campaign has occurred at the highest national level.
<b>SI Eisenach, Germany</b>	This club provides on-going support to help the handicapped. The club is purchasing a "Butterfly Tub" to enable the local Handicap Association to provide water therapy. There is a kindergarten in the same building and the members will supply and maintain toys for the children. They will also arrange to sell, on behalf of the handicapped, their art at a local bazaar.	<b>SI Hannover, Germany</b>	The club is financing a therapy group for young women with eating disorders through the Women's Centre of Hannover.
		<b>SI Helena, Western Australia</b>	The members became aware of the increasing incidence of diabetes throughout most of the world. The complications of the disease, especially those of the cardiovascular system are the usual cause of death in diabetics. The cost of treatment of the complications is high and in some countries beyond the reach of many of those with the disease. The club supports a Chair in research. Through a annual garden craft fair they provide stalls, sell food and have raised more than \$AUD10,300 to support the Chair.





**Section 1:**  
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**'Women & Health' Club Activities**

<b>SI Hornshy, New South Wales, Australia</b>	Members were approached to assist with elderly people living in a Lodge. They assisted the occupational therapist by helping with her sessions and the physiotherapist by assisting with the exercise programme. They also visited the residents in their rooms where they engaged them in conversation, read or wrote letters for them, took them for walks, assisted with shopping and generally helped to improve their enjoyment of life.	<b>SI Union of Italy</b>	The members of the Union decided to make use of the expertise available in their members to produce a book which they titled " <i>Assisted Fertilization-What Is Possible and What Is Reasonable</i> ". It is an excellent book, very easy to read in layman terms, and covers the topic very well. The book covers the topics under the following headings: <i>The Medical Aspect, Genetic Questions, Psychological Aspects of Infertility and Assisted Fertilization, Desire to Become a Parent, Experience of Parents Who Have Undergone Assisted Fertilization, the Child Born by Assisted Fertilization, the Child Facing Adoption and Fostering, Adoption from the Point of View of the Women, International Adoption, the Technical Stork and the Female Question, Legislation in Italy: Where Have We Got To? A Comparison of Different Legislations, Legislative Proposal of a Research Committee of the Soroptimist Club of Verona, a Legislative Project Concerning Assisted Fertilization. Assisted Fertilization: Bioethical Aspects, Assisted Fertilization: Ethical Aspects, Biogenetic Techniques: Ethical Arguments and Safeguarding the Life of the Embryo and finally Moral Reflections.</i>
<b>SI Icelandic Union, Iceland</b>	The combined Union has created a leaflet for children entering school describing the dangers of abuse and violence and the child's recourse to seeking help.		
<b>SI Innisfail, North Queensland, Australia</b>	Letters were forwarded to Members of Parliament in an endeavour to stop the closure of a local Women in Crisis Shelter: Helped to raise funds to purchase one or two kidney machines for a local kidney group. The local population has a higher than average kidney failure figures and no dialysis machines. Patients need to travel 1-1.5 hrs twice a week to use a machine or relocate to a larger town/city.		
<b>SI Innsbruck, Austria</b>	Club provides support for the 'TANGRAM' Centre that provides help for families, children, teenagers, parents and relatives affected by violence and sexual abuse.	<b>SI Jabalpur, India</b>	club members help with medical check-ups of children and adults suffering from malnutrition, TB and stomach diseases.
<b>SI Ipsae, Mauritius</b>	Club produced and had printed 40,000 leaflets to help women detect breast cancer. They distributed these and had a further 80,000 printed and distributed. Members have also been involved with a counselling "hot line" and help groups and have gained publicity through TV interviews. The project has raised awareness on the subject of cancer, especially breast cancer, and people who formally kept silent, as it was considered a taboo subject, now feel able to speak freely and share their feelings with others.	<b>SI Jerusalem- West, Israel</b>	The Cancer Hospice has been adopted by the club. Members visit the patients each week helping them emotionally and physically.
		<b>SI Johannesbur g, South Africa</b>	'Sparrows Nest' a hospice for AIDS patients who live the last few months of their life in peace and tranquillity with good medical care. The project is one of fund raising, advocacy and support. SI has particular concern for the vulnerability of women to this disease and recognises the epidemic especially threatens the welfare of children.



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*towards a society for all ages*  
International Year of Older Persons 1999

***TOWARDS A SOCIETY FOR ALL AGES***

**Federation Club Action Kit**

***International Year of The Older Person-Women***

Soroptimist International of the Americas (SIA) has developed a kit for the 1999 International Year of Older Persons to encourage grass roots efforts to meet the United Nations challenge to begin working "Towards a Society for all Ages". The goal is to bring attention to the conditions older women face as a unique group and to assist local Soroptimist clubs in their efforts to address the needs of older women. The kit focuses on three issues of vital importance to older women: older women's health, domestic violence against older women, and the economics of aging for women.

On the topic of older women's health, the kit provides information about four areas of great concern for older women worldwide: cardiovascular disease, breast and gynecological cancers, osteoporosis, and depression—a condition which the World Health Organization projects to become the leading cause of "disease burden" for women by the year 2020. The kit also addresses the issue of older women's access to health care, particularly low-income, immigrant and indigenous women, and women in developing nations. Clubs are encouraged to help raise community awareness about older women's health needs, undertake and support projects that increase older women's access to health care, and advocate for increased attention and research into mid-life and older women's health.

This SIA project will help inspire more grass roots activities on behalf of older women. It will also help raise awareness about the importance of the UN system in addressing the human rights, health and economic issues that effect all people. The kit has been distributed to over 1,500 clubs in 19 countries and territories throughout North America, Latin America and Asia, and has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and Japanese.



**Section 1:**  
**Soroptimist International**  
**'Women & Health' Club Activities**

<b>SI Kodiak, Alaska USA</b>	established the Myrt Myers Cancer Awareness Fund in 1997, to provide health exams—including mammograms and gynecological cancer screening—to low-income women in the Kodiak, Alaska area. The Fund has helped to raise awareness about important women's health issues in the community, and has helped to establish a network of local NGOs and health care providers that carries out year-round public education and health care outreach to low-income, immigrant and indigenous populations.	<b>SI Kuantan, Malaysia</b>	The members heard about the lack of medical facilities in Kampung and organized a screening and education seminar. This small village is in the interior of Malaysia and geographically isolated from medical services. The medical camp was organized by SI, the District Hospital and Dept. of Aborigines Affairs. The aims were to make contact with the aborigines to gain their trust and friendship, to assess their health status, to diagnose congenital and other conditions in the young, with a view to possible correction or improvement, to supply them with information on a healthy lifestyle and the importance of basic hygiene. Medical screening covered checking of blood pressure, blood sugar, vision, a pap smear, examination of the eye and de-worming. A dental check was done and instruction was given in the correct method of tooth brushing. Talks were given on breast feeding, AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. Gifts, food hampers, secondhand clothes and games for the children were distributed. It was noted the local water supply was unsatisfactory and probably contributed to a skin condition common to the villagers. Involvement will continue on this project.
<b>SI Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia</b>	Members of this club became aware of the increase not only in the incidence of asthma in both adults and children but in the number of fatalities. They arranged a seminar in Intan in order to draw attention to the seriousness of the disease, how to recognize the symptoms, the means of reducing the attacks and the treatment of the disease. The seminar will also be presented in other districts.	<b>SI Labasa, Fiji</b>	The club organized a medical workshop, in a rural set up for the general public, to make people aware of the seriousness of sicknesses, such as diabetes, heart problems, etc. Specialists spoke on diabetes, dental care, nutrition and showed charts and pictures. An open forum followed for questions and discussion. Following the talk those present were offered free dental check-ups, blood pressure and sugar tests.
	<b>SI Lier-De- Zilveren Knoop, Belgium</b>	supports a new palliative care unit in their town. This type of treatment is very labour intensive and therefore very expensive. With a number of different methods of fund raising events they raised \$US 15,000 towards the unit.	





**Section 1:**  
**Soroptimist International**  
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<b>SI Ljubljana, SI Maribor, Slovenia</b>	In partnership with the European Federation Refugee Project fund, refugee children in Slovenia have received dental care.	<b>SI Mulhouse, France</b>	Club has participated in a debate on Organ Donations and Transplantation. They have donated over 625,000 FF to medical research of Hematology and Blood Transfusion Research Institute.
<b>SI Maidstone, England</b>	'Family Circle' was set up in 1993 by an alliance of local, educational, social services, and religious organizations as well as parents. The project provides a central venue to Parkwood (a small housing estate with a large proportion of residents who are single - many with no knowledge of parenting) where families can have easy access to information, advice and support from both the statutory and voluntary agencies. It also provides a venue where health visitors and other agencies can run therapeutic group works to help young parents learn and develop various skills such as parenting, health awareness and raise self esteem. And it facilitates opportunities for children to learn through play maximizing their development potentials. Family Circle has also facilitated Bellwood Infant School to set up an After School Family Club which focuses on diet and nutrition. Since January they have also set up a Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Co-operative which will expand to include nappies and other everyday essential items.	<b>SI Northwest England and Isle of Man, United Kingdom</b>	Research since 1995 on plant/food biotechnology. The Biotechnology for Lay People project started studying biopiracy and patenting, but later diverged slightly to include recent supermarket developments. Clubs prepared a booklet as a result of the work completed. The question is how to balance the plight of many countries whose economy was being affected with the more positive side. The questions being raised came close to home with an attempt to compare a can of genetically altered and a can of common tomato paste. Members urge awareness of these issues.
<b>SI Mandaluyon g, Philippines</b>	sponsors quarterly free medical and dental missions to low-income neighbourhoods. The club has built a network of volunteer physicians and nurses, who conduct health and dental exams, and dispense free medication. The club also distributes food to local residents, and distributes information about achieving good nutrition and general well-being.	<b>SI Pune, India</b>	Cancer screening Camp: living in a highly urbanised area with severe pollution living conditions are often miserable. The poor women do not have easy access to diagnostic centres. Club organized cancer screening and preventive camp in the area where they do free immunizations. Cost of one such camp is quite high. Funds were donated by friendship link club in Bridgewater, UK.
<b>SI Matanuska- Susitna, Alaska USA</b>	has partnered with a local battered women's shelter for the last 4 years to provide victims of violence with health exams, mammograms, and cervical cancer screening.	<b>SI Rehovot, Israel</b>	Professional counseling is provided by this club to a special hostel for ex-women prisoners and their young children. The hostel gives these women a second chance to raise their children.
		<b>Rwanda Fund of the European Federation</b>	This Fund consisting of donations by individual clubs has helped more than 875 orphans live in new foster care families. The foster mothers, mostly war widows, are also developing new businesses so that when the children grow they will be able to be self-sufficient.



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## **CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE - FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION 1998 - 1999 Federation Project**

Soroptimist International of Europe Federation Health Project will concentrate on the issue of Female Genital Mutilation.

It is estimated that there are ,at present, over 120 million girls and women who have undergone some form of genital mutilation and at least 2 million girls are at risk each year. The practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or Female Circumcision (FC) is one of the harmful traditional practices that are deeply rooted in many developing nations, especially in Africa where it is being practiced in about 26 African countries. Nowadays we can find the problem of FGM all over the world because of the easy communication, transportation, migration, and refugees. FGM is not now a private matter and its secrecy has been removed.

It is known that the physical and psychological effects of the practice are very extensive affecting mainly sexual, reproductive and mental health. The damage done to the female sexual organs and their functions is extensive and irreversible.

Despite recognition of the importance of this sensitive issue there is still a major gap in knowledge about the extent and nature of the problem and the kinds of intervention that can be successful in eliminating it.

The Federation of Europe is approaching FGM through *Awareness, Advocacy and Action*. A leaflet about FGM will be issued and distributed to all Soroptimist members to raise awareness of the issue and highlight the extent of this practice by giving historical background, statistics, types and facts about FGM, also its health complications for women, both physical and psychological. A round table discussion on this topic will be held during the next Governor's meeting in April. All unions and single clubs will participate in this discussion sharing their experiences, ideas and information. Strategy and a plan of action will be developed based on members recommendation.

Advocacy at the policy maker level as well as with other NGO's is an on-going segment of this project. A successful advocacy plan has been implemented by SI Cairo with financial support by SI Luxembourg.



**Section 1:**  
**Soroptimist International**  
**'Women & Health' Club Activities**

<b>SI</b> <b>San Jacinto-</b> <b>Hemet</b> <b>Valley,</b> <b>California</b> <b>USA</b>	<p>The club members have been trained by the American Cancer Society to visit women's groups to talk about breast examination and to increase awareness of breast cancer. They make use of a video which they have had produced and frequently provide the group with a copy of the video for future use. They include with the video a brochure on breast cancer and a waterproof card on step-by-step examination of the breast to hang in the shower. Some of the cards have a sample "lump" in them so that women know what a breast lump feels like. They are encouraging women to do self breast examination.</p>	<b>SI</b> <b>Selby,</b> <b>England</b>	<p>Alcohol Survey of Fourteen Year Old Pupils. Mindful that local authorities held disparate views on the 'problem' of underage drinking in their area, club members felt that an objective survey would help shed some light. They surveyed 14 year old boys and girls in each of six appropriate schools. Survey feedback was provided to the Council, Police and Schools. Their activities lead to media interviews and participation at major conferences. Members now sit on three task groups and are producing a book "Survival Guide for Young People".</p>
<b>SI</b> <b>Schwabisch</b> <b>Hall,</b> <b>Germany</b>	<p>Helps provide finances for the <i>Organization for Life Support</i> to support mothers of handicapped children. The club finances free weekends for the handicapped children to get away so that the mothers or carers could have some respite. The handicapped children are cared for by Soroptimists in their homes. Those who looked after the children found it a very rewarding experience. The funds for the project were raised by selling home items and produce at bazaars.</p>	<b>SI</b> <b>Sitges-</b> <b>Vilanova,</b> <b>Spain</b>	<p>Club provides people with multiple sclerosis an opportunity to participate in a swimming pool therapy programme. Well known speakers are invited to participate</p>
<b>SI</b> <b>Scotland</b> <b>South,</b> <b>United</b> <b>Kingdom</b>	<p>SI presented a study on the Long Term Care of Elderly to the Royal Commission. The club's comments were grounded on many years knowledge of care for older people in hospitals and in community settings, both as health professionals and as concerned relatives. Their concern is for the welfare of older people and all who will grow old. Their recommendations were enclosed in a 13 point document focusing on the efficient delivery of services to meet the needs of the elderly. Such issues as funding availability, training of health care professions, management of services on the providers.</p>	<b>SI</b> <b>Smith Valley,</b> <b>Nevada USA</b>	<p>Osteoporosis Testing: the club became aware of the need for financial help for women who cannot afford to be tested for this problem. The club set up a fund to cover the cost of screening, alerted local doctors that this fund was available and got the hospital that provided the testing to offer it to women with the club paying a reduced fee.</p>





# Section 1

## Soroptimist International

### 'Women & Health' Club Activities

#### SI Solomon Islands

Club members received a copy of the UNICEF publication "Facts for Life". With a rural literacy rate of 17% the members felt it would have limited use. They had it translated into Solomon Island pidgin and broadcast over the Solomon Islands Women's Information and Communication Network (SIWINET). This is a very important method means for communication as the Solomon Islands is made up of a large number of small islands, with the method of transport by small boats between the islands. The success from this translation encouraged the members to produce the information in Solomon Island pidgin in book form. The skill base of the members was used, a trained nurse to prepare the messages and others to translate the text into pidgin. UNICEF illustrations were used. Chapters covered Immunization, Diarrhoea, Timing of births, Safe motherhood, Breast feeding, child growth, cough colds and 'flu', Hygiene, Malaria, Child development and AIDS.

The funding for the printing of the first 1500 copies was provided by the club and UNICEF and the second run of 2000 copies by the New Zealand government. The book is printed in pidgin or in English and is used by a number of other groups such as the US Peace Corps volunteers, New Zealand and UK aid workers.

#### SI Sonderborg, Denmark

Club supports HIV infected women and children in Sonderjylland. The club raised over 68,000 kr in a number of events, bazaars, concerts and torchlight procession. In addition they hosted an International AIDS day including a competition by high school students.

#### SI South Auckland, New Zealand

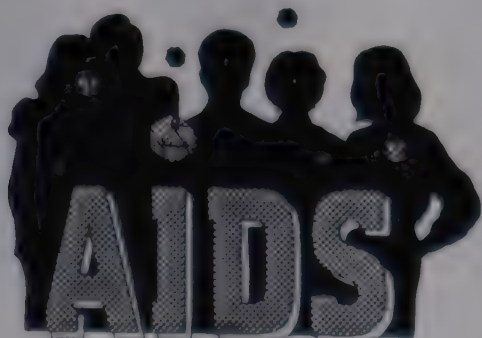
Member walks weekly with young women who are visually impaired then assists with training to use KASPA (Kay's Audio Sensory Perception Aid), which is a sonar type and which has recently been developed. The member assists and supports on familiarization outings.

#### SI South East England, England

Rail Travelers and Personal Safety: Women's Perspectives. The club formed a Task Force of women from Clubs in SI England and looked at Britain's railways through women's eyes and provided recommendations to make rail travel safer and more attractive for women. Women want to feel free of fear of assaults or harassment and to know that help is at hand if problems arise. Data included grassroots surveys of women's experiences and top level interviews. The club released the report to the public in May 1997.

#### SI Tallin Old Town, Estonia

Members had noted the increasing problem of drug abuse from the use of narcotics and other substances. This was creating problems at home and in the schools, The parents of those involved were unable to persuade their children to take steps to beat the habit. The members decided to see if there was some way in which they could help. They approached a police officer who worked in the drug area. He told them there was a very good book written in Finnish and that the police would like it translated into Estonian. The members of Tallin Old Town arranged for that to be done and this year are having it translated into Russian for use in the Russian schools.





# Section 1

## Soroptimist International

### 'Women & Health' Club Activities

<b>SI Townsville, Townsville Breakwater, Townsville West, North Queensland,Au stralia</b>	<p>Mentoring Indigenous Women on Palm Island. Members in Townsville are involved in a long-term mentoring programme with Aboriginal and Islander women residing on an isolated island 50 kilometers offshore. The community comprises 3,000 people from 42 tribal groups forcibly relocated earlier this century. Significant social and health problems stem from excessive alcohol and drug consumption and high unemployment (over 90%), resulting in truancy, vandalism, poor self esteem, youth suicide, teenage pregnancies and domestic violence. Long term effects are high infant mortality, adult illiteracy, welfare dependency, degradation and widespread hopelessness. Governments provide financial assistance, but this alone has not proved sufficient to break, the cycle of despair. Working within the 12 critical areas of the Platform for Action, this Soroptimist programme of awareness, advocacy and action is acknowledged as the interface support between Government bodies, elders and women. Mentoring provides ongoing motivation and commitment for social and economic development.</p>	<b>SI Yorkshire Region, England</b>	<p>The clubs of this region became aware of the need to promote AIDS awareness in the Mission for Seamen clubs worldwide. They were very impressed by the help and support provided by the Mission, but realized there was a need for the promotion of AIDS awareness in these areas. The Mission in Bangkok was growing very rapidly so they decided to support it. At the suggestion of the Mission padre they agreed to provide the funds for the production of leaflets to promote awareness of AIDS. At first they were produced in eight languages and when more funds are available they will be printed in eleven languages.</p>
<b>SI Turkish Union, Turkey</b>	<p>The clubs in Turkey are helping to provide legal identities to children of unofficial marriages.</p>	<b>SI Zagreb, Croatia</b>	<p>The club along with the help of the Federation Action Fund has printed a comic-strip for 240,000 school children between the ages of 7-10 describing the dangers of land mines.</p>
<b>SI Ulm, Germany</b>	<p>club supports a hostel for young street drug addicts</p>		
<b>SI Vilnius Old Town, Lithuania</b>	<p>Vilnius Old Town is involved in a research project to develop new ways of optical biopsy for use in female genital investigation. The club members helped transport equipment from one town to another and enlisted women to participate in the research itself.</p>		
<b>SI White Rock, Canada</b>	<p>co-sponsored a Breast Cancer Forum with the Canadian Cancer Society. The Forum featured a panel of physicians and other health care providers, and attracted over 150 women.</p>		
<b>SI Wolver- hampton, England</b>	<p>researching the UK's rate of underage pregnancies, -highest in Europe, - and is involved in conducting research with Netherlands: -the lowest in Europe.</p>		





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Mozambique, Nigeria,  
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Ireland, Republic of South  
Africa, Seychelles, Sierra  
Leone, Sri Lanka, St.  
Vincent & The  
Grenadines, Thailand,  
Trinidad & Tobago,  
Turks & Caicos Islands,  
Uganda, United Kingdom  
of Great Britain &  
Northern Ireland,  
Zimbabwe (11/98)*

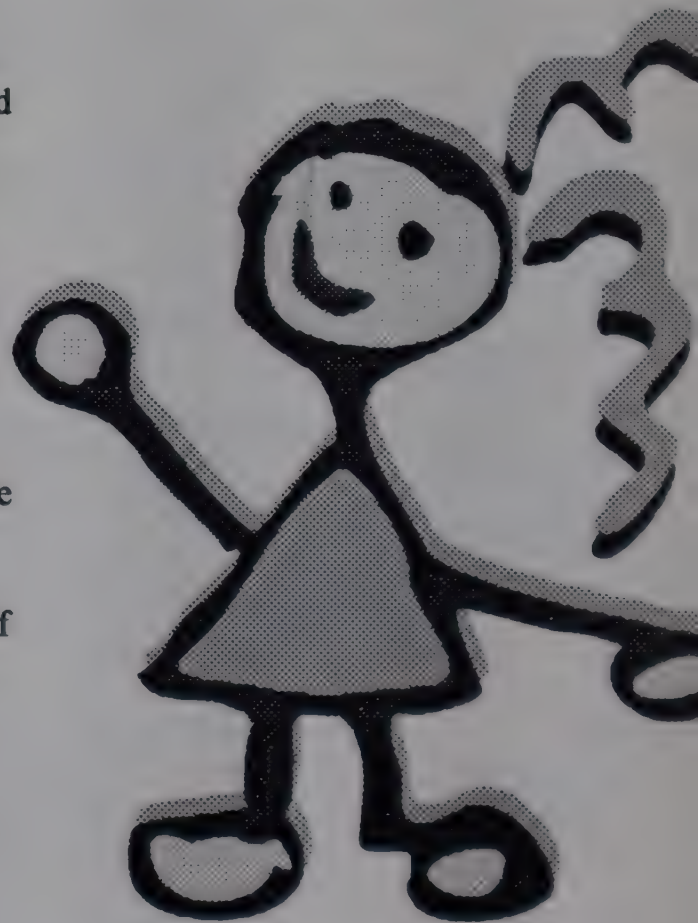
**FEDERATION SPOTLIGHT ON CLUBS**

**Caring for Carers 1990-1997 - SI Republic of Ireland**

Women in the family are the main caregivers. They continue to be the strongest most reliable source of care for elderly people, those with disability and the chronically ill. Recognising that the majority of people need care in the home, Soroptimists researched and developed this project in clubs through the country who responded with support, funding, etc. for this cause. An extensive network of support groups was formed providing much needed hands on help, information and training for those caring for sick relatives. Weekend respite breaks were provided at local and national level and to date have facilitated in excess of 3000 carers while those they care for are looked after in the home. As a result of its success SI Republic of Ireland launched a *Carers Charter* which has been presented to Ministers for Health and Social Welfare, Women's Rights Committee of the European Union and the Commissioner for Social Affairs of the E.U. It is hoped that the *Carers Charter* will be seen as an instrument to raise the awareness of policy makers of the need to create an infrastructure of care within the community and address the fundamental rights of carers.

**Vaccination Against Tuberculosis: SI Cameroon**

Club members launched vaccination programmes to commemorate the *Day of the African Child* through widespread publicity via radio, and by sensitising women's groups. The response by the community was impressive. A total of 1,235 individuals were given free BCG vaccinations and many children also received polio vaccine which the public health unit of Bonassama Hospital offered the club free support. This wellness and prevention of transmissible diseases by immunisation and education. The project raises awareness, promotes advocacy on behalf of women and actively combats the spread of transmissible diseases.





## **SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL AIDS MEDIATION - SIAM**

Soroptimist International adopted the SIAM project for the 1995 - 1999 Quadrennial International Project. It is being undertaken in 10 villages in the rural area of Northern Thailand, where there is a very high incidence of HIV/AIDS infection. It is based on a pilot project in one village in the same area in 1994/5 arranged by Soroptimist International of Berwick and the Region of Victoria, Australia. In 1997 a successful application to the UK Lottery International Grants Committee meant that a further 3 villages could be included in the project.

The basic aim is HIV/ AIDS prevention by providing educational scholarships, vocational training, and alternative forms of income generation (employment) for the young women of the villages (target group 12 - 25 year olds) to obviate the practice of them leaving home for the cities to join the Commercial Sex Industry - previously almost the only (and traditional ) way of earning money. The area is one of the poorest in Thailand, most families dependent on subsistence agriculture (rice farming).

Our partners in Thailand are the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), a highly respected and successful NGO. They are implementing the work and one of their main foci is to provide a village educational mobile team.

This conducts community activities using wide screen project films, videos, participatory games, theatre and music - attractions to gather the local community combined with HIV/AIDS education. In



SIAM Women's weaving group

addition youth group activities in each village has directed HIV/AIDS education at the target group of young women, but has also included male peers, village leaders, the married women's group and school teachers so that the entire village has been involved in HIV/AIDS and CSI education. The whole wider community is benefitting from this education and attitudes are slowly changing from within the population itself, aided, encouraged and supported by local and governmental officials.

By mid 1998, 1007 scholarships had been provided and three young women have now graduated at University level. Non-formal education and occupational training to provide villagers with the knowledge to set up income

generating projects has led to initiatives such as weaving cloth, jewellery manufacture, poultry farming, growing passion fruit (for juice), and vinyl bag manufacture. A revolving loan system is in operation in support of these enterprises, with strict criteria for obtaining, maintaining and repaying the loans.

SIAM encompasses all our organisation's six programmes of service and has demonstrated already the enhancement of the status of women in the area. The monitoring of implementation and progress is through regular reports from the PDA, and by specially arranged visits to the project by

Soroptimists. These have served to strengthen the relationship between the PDA, the villagers and Soroptimist International, and have proved very rewarding to all the participants in the project.



SIAM Jewellery Factory: Sept 1998

Young woman in foreground started in the gem cutting initiative in 1996/97. She is now the senior operative in the factory.

Mary Buchanan,  
International Liaison for the  
SIAM project



**Section 1**  
**Soroptimist International**  
**'Women & Health' Club Activities**

**Soroptimist International**  
**Presidents Appeal**  
**December 10 1998**

*Solomon Islands Women's Centre  
and Radio Station*

President Hilary's December 10<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Day appeal for 1998 is for the creation of the **Solomon Islands Women's Centre** in Honiara where women would get information on women's issues and experience, advice on starting a business as well as provide an outlet for them to sell items they have made. It would also incorporate a community radio station, a restaurant, snack bar, small bakery, handicraft centre, trade store and a technology workshop for the production of charcoal stoves, mosquito nets and solar ovens. It will also provide marketing advice for self employed women and give them a direct outlet for their goods.

Communication is a major difficulty because literacy is as low as 17% among rural women. Since printed material is not an option, the radio station will greatly assist by providing programmes for women, enabling them to participate and broadcast information on health, nutrition, safe motherhood, general hygiene and other topics to help women improve their lifestyles.

The Presidents December 10<sup>th</sup> Appeal is a voluntary donation received from clubs throughout our 115 countries. This is an excellent opportunity for Clubs to contribute to a International human rights need, usually to a project that is under served and little known.

Within the past few years donations for specific appeals have exceeded US\$ 500,000.





## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

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### Abuse: Drug And Substance

Soroptimist International accepts the concept of preventive health care and is committed to the provision of health education and information, to all members of communities, as a means of improving the health, access to health care, and quality of life of all people.

Worldwide trends show increases in abuse of narcotic drugs, other drugs and substances by all segments of society, but particularly by youth. Soroptimist International is concerned about the detrimental effects to the overall health and well-being of the individual, family, community, and society, caused by drug and substance abuse, including tobacco and alcohol, and dependency. Its members are aware of the need for continued and strengthened focus, on national and international, programmes of collaboration, co-operation and intervention, to bring about changes in these trends.

Soroptimist International supports, global programmes and activities which :

tend to curb illegal growth, production, transport and trafficking of narcotics and other drugs of abuse

1) consider each individual country's involvement and the intricacies, inherent in both the drug "supply" and "demand" situations

2) recognise the necessity and priority that must be given to the review of the socio- economic and agricultural situations existing in specific drug "supply" countries and to the promotion of studies of alternative methods for economic and agricultural development

Soroptimist International supports the concept of the development of clinics

for those who genuinely wish to overcome their addiction and advocates that :

- these are in a suitable, clean environment
- they recognise the individual's human rights
- they provide the relevant support services
- they provide and evaluate the statistical results of the treatment

Since substance abuse and addiction, relate to products which are, in the main readily available for purchase, the only form of prevention and treatment is by education and support of the addict, their family and friends. Soroptimist International therefore encourages its members to continue their work with governments, non-governmental organisations, voluntary agencies and other relevant bodies, to develop programmes of education and support, at local, national and international level.

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### (AIDS) Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

Soroptimist International recognises HIV/AIDS to be a global epidemic threatening human survival, human rights and human development and is committed to playing its full part as a non-governmental organisation, in response to this.

Soroptimist International has particular concern for the vulnerability of women to this disease, and recognises too that the epidemic especially threatens the welfare of children everywhere, but

particularly in the developing countries, by, both killing children and creating orphans. As well as being infected, women are also the major carers for persons infected and in this respect Soroptimist International is especially concerned for women, the children, the elderly and for the members of the extended family.

Acknowledging that many factors are involved in the spread of this disease - social, economic, political, cultural, religious, climatic and environmental, migration, commerce and tourism - Soroptimist International asks its members to continue to :

- raise public awareness and disseminate information
- work to change attitudes and defend the human rights of patients
- encourage global thinking and co-operation
- lobby governments and international agencies for more resources and research
- raise the status of women to ensure their participation in prevention and control.

Soroptimist International urges governments and all other appropriate bodies to :

act speedily by providing effective prevention programmes targeted at young people, with particular regard to the transmission of HIV by sexual contact and by the effects of all forms of drug use.



## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

- provide care of HIV infected patients within the context of local conditions, but no less dignified than that for other medical conditions.
- demands and resource major efforts in research and treatment development that must include women.
- provide adequate resources to support both HIV and AIDS victims and their carers

Soroptimist International will network with governments, non-governmental, voluntary and all other appropriate bodies, including the United Nations and the World Health Organisation, to encourage complete inter agency collaboration and co-operation, which is the only effective way of combating this pandemic.

Soroptimist International urges all governments to work collaboratively, in recognition that, only a global programme which would include complete inter-agency co-operation can be truly effective in combating this pandemic.

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### Biotechnology, Biodiversity, Bioethic and Genetic Engineering

Soroptimist International acknowledges the value to mankind of biological diversity. Although the current rapid advances in biotechnology have the potential for positive development in farming, food, health and habitat, they also give cause of concern.

Soroptimist International therefore advocates:

- The implementation by all signatories of The

Convention on Biodiversity opened to signature at the UN Earth Summit in Rio 1992 and entered into force December 1993.

- That the recommendations in Chapters 15 and 16 of Agenda 21, also agreed at Rio, be given full international support.
- That the United Nations Environment Programme instigate the setting up of control systems for such aspects as the release and use of genetically modified organisms, retention and sustainable use of biodiversity and the protection of species.
- That the United Nations Environment Programme also urgently address the ethical questions raised by biotechnological research and development.
- That the patenting of genetically modified organisms be managed under an international agreement.
- That there be global sharing of knowledge and technology relating to biotechnological development concerning indigenous peoples' knowledge.
- That financial and human resources be intensified to assist biodiversity-rich developing countries in their conservation efforts.

Soroptimist International also advocates the need for partnerships between governments, the scientific community, the United Nations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and financial institutions. The benefits (including commercial and economic) must be shared with the developing countries

of the world.

Soroptimist International urges its members to:

- Raise awareness of all aspects of biotechnology.
- Disseminate and press for public access to information.
- Monitor developments worldwide.
- Ensure women are represented in decision-making that may affect their traditional values and lifestyles.
- Monitor government legislation and lobby for ethical standards relating to biotechnological research and development.

Soroptimist International encourages members to use its network to raise community awareness, exchange information, discuss issues and to promote understanding of the possible benefits, concerns and abuses resulting from the new biotechnology and genetic research.

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### Child: Rights of the

Soroptimist International believes that the world's children are entitled to special care and assistance. It recognises the importance of international co-operation, for establishing, and implementing the rights, and improving the living conditions, of children in every country, particularly in the developing countries. It is committed to the principle, that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child should be paramount



## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

Soroptimist International believes that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is correct in emphasising the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents, or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or the community, where that is the local custom, to provide the direction and guidance which enable the child to exercise the rights recognised in the Convention.

Soroptimist International further believes the Convention is correct in laying duties on the State and therefore urges the governments of all countries to :

- ratify and implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- develop legislation and programmes aimed at the eradication of the exploitation of children
- provide education for all children
- provide adequate food, clean water, shelter and a safe environment
- protect children against physical, sexual or emotional abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation
- promote their physical and psychological health and welfare
- forbid exploitative employment
- administer adequate juvenile justice
- have particular care for children who live on the streets, for refugees and victims of war
- co-operate internationally, sharing resources, to fulfil their commitment to supporting the rights of children everywhere

Soroptimist International will work in partnership with governments, with

other non-governmental organisations and with UN agencies, to provide technical assistance, monitoring and research of all programmes involving children; to ensure compliance with laws and with the United Nations Convention.

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### **Development: Sustainable and Environment**

Soroptimist International recognises the widespread environmental degradation which threatens the planet and all its life forms, as well as the need for continued development and social welfare and endorses the principle of sustainable development as conceived by the World Commission on Environment and Development, launched at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio 1992 and supervised by the UN Commission for Sustainable Development.

Soroptimist International urges all governments to co-operate to :

adopt policies of development that will provide a better quality of life for all people in the present generation, without endangering the lives of future ones

- develop education programmes that increase awareness of the mechanisms that rule the economy and ecology of the world
- encourage the modification of attitudes and lifestyles to help maintain the ecological balance for the survival of the planet
- mainstream the principle of sustainable development

in all relevant policies.

- create a more equitable sharing of all resources and work to eliminate poverty, which is the environment's worst enemy

Soroptimist International believes that each person has a responsibility for environmental degradation and must consider the environmental impact of their own actions, in their business, professional and personal lives. It therefore asks its members, in their roles of consumer, producer, manager and conservator, of natural resources and environmental quality, and working as equal partners with men, in the environment and development decision making process, to :

- increase their own awareness of the economy and ecology of the world
- examine their own attitudes and lifestyles and their impact on the environment
- strive by advocacy and action for a sustainable environment within the framework of the decisions agreed at the World Conferences in Rio in 1992 and Beijing in 1995
- assist and support the development of less privileged regions in accordance with the principles of sustainability
- work in partnership with other non-governmental and voluntary organisations, to ensure the commitment of governments, to the protection of the planet by sustainable development



## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

### **Diseases: Preventing**

Soroptimist International believes it is important to promote wellness, prevent illness and to provide for early detection of, and intervention, in disease, with special emphasis on how these affect women and children.

Prevention has become increasingly important because of the escalating costs of health care and the likelihood that these high costs could exclude some sections of the population from receiving adequate health services.

Soroptimist International therefore advocates:

- the prevention of transmissible diseases by immunisation and education
- the prevention of ill health arising from environmental, social and genetic factors
- the prevention of substance abuse e.g. tobacco, alcohol, drugs and solvents
- the promotion of healthy lifestyles through better nutrition, exercise and hygiene
- the promotion of health education and training, especially for women
- the promotion of measures to reduce the risk of cardiovascular illness and cancer
- the provision for early detection and intervention in disease
- the provision of safe water and adequate sanitation
- the provision of assistance

with servicing and transporting of medical equipment to areas of need

- the provision of adequate resources for research

Soroptimist International urges governments to act to ensure that these preventive measures are available to all people.

It will work with other non-governmental and voluntary organisations, to monitor the implementation of all commitments made by governments and professional agencies in these matters.

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### **FMG and Traditional Practices Adversely Affecting Women and Children**

Soroptimist International is concerned about the effects of harmful, traditional practices, which exist as a result of the combination of deeply-rooted, psychological, sexual, religious, cultural and psycho-sexual beliefs and which are known to have damaging effects on the mental and physical health of millions of women and children.

These practices include :

- genital mutilation
- facial scarification
- the forced feeding of women
- child marriage, forced marriage
- the various taboos and practices which prevent women from controlling their own fertility
- nutritional taboos
- traditional practices relating to childbirth

- certain dowry systems
- treatment of brides (bride burning)
- 'crimes of honour'
- son preference
- treatment of widows

Soroptimist International believes that this is a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

It urges its members to:

1. become informed about traditional practices and their harmful effect on women and children
2. work with the women of the affected communities towards the eradication of these practices
3. support appropriate education programmes within these communities
4. encourage the participation of women in the decision making process, for the improvement of their health and well-being and that of their daughters

With the approval of Soroptimists in these communities, Soroptimist International will work to convince governments to forbid, by law, these harmful traditional practices and will follow closely, the implementation of such laws once passed.



## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

### Freshwater

Soroptimist International believes that all people have a right to clean, safe drinking water and sanitation and that governments of all countries must co-operate to safeguard this right.

Soroptimist International recognises that access to safe water and adequate sanitation is the foundation of development and that rare water resources can be at the origin of struggles between population groups.

Soroptimist International therefore urges governments to ensure the right to safe water for all people by:

1. safeguarding water resources throughout the whole water-cycle by ensuring that water management practices follow, as far as possible, those of nature
2. integrating all strategies, using the principle of sustainable development, to provide enough freshwater for healthy drinking and necessary sanitation purposes
3. promoting water-saving and water-recycling schemes and ensuring safe sewage disposal, if necessary, with the use of financial incentives
4. protecting the quality and quantity of underground water by regulating the input of both pesticides and fertilisers in agriculture and chemicals used in industrial processes and by conserving a maximum of permeability of the soil
5. sharing skills, technologies and research data pertaining to freshwater provision and protection, to help ensure the sustainability of this essential resource
6. encouraging women in their role as family manager,

water-consumer and potential water-conserver to :

- participate in and promote, public education programmes about these topics
- participate actively in the planning and implementation, at all levels, of programmes to improve water supply, sanitary conditions and public health, particularly in communities where the quantity and/or quality of water is inadequate.
- adopt a sense of personal responsibility for the environment in their use of water

Soroptimist International will work with governments, other non-governmental and voluntary organisations and with all appropriate agencies, to increase public awareness of, and sensitivity to, environmental and developmental problems in relation to water supply and quality; to advocate that governments adopt a global integrative strategy for the provision and conservation of water, with consideration of all the aspects of the water-cycle; and to assist women in less privileged regions to improve their access to clean water and adequate sanitation.

### Landmines: Anti-personnel

Soroptimist International fully supports the Ottawa Convention, Canada 1997, calling for the destruction of, and the prohibition of, the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of Anti-personnel Landmines. Soroptimist International recognises that these landmines are widely distributed in

many countries, are extremely hard to detect and are killing or maiming men, women and children, both during armed conflict and for many years afterwards. They affect all aspects of life, including security, health and development, for they impoverish communities, by denying access to land and by destroying the environment, thus preventing social and economic recovery.

Soroptimist International urges all governments to :

- ratify and implement the Ottawa Convention and the United Nations Inhumane Weapons Convention
- support and contribute to the International Fund, administered by the United Nations, to promote and finance, awareness, clearance and eradication programmes, world-wide
- include, in the process of signing peace accords/agreements, the commitment to the eradication of all deployed landmines and destruction of stockpiles
- provide long term support to affected countries in their landmine removal efforts
- urge discussion and monitoring of the landmine issue at the annual Conference on Disarmament
- provide education and disseminate information to civilians, especially children, about the dangers of landmines
- develop comprehensive systems to promote the physical and psychological recovery, and social reintegration, of victims



## Section 2

# Soroptimist International Position Statements

Soroptimist International advocates immediate and concerted action by governments, non-governmental and voluntary organisations, United Nations agencies and other appropriate services, to work in partnership, to alleviate the plight of all civilians, affected by landmines.

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### Illiteracy: Eradication of

Soroptimist International is concerned that more than two thirds of the world's 960 million illiterate adults are women and that this continuing high rate of illiteracy remains a severe impediment to the advancement and development of women and girls.

The eradication of illiteracy among women is a clearly stated strategic objective in the Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995. Soroptimist International fully supports the Platform for Action and believes literacy is the key to :

- improving education, health and nutrition in the family;
- empowering women to participate in decision making and giving women confidence to ask for their rights

Soroptimist International urges governments, national, regional and international bodies, bilateral and multilateral donors and non-governmental organisations of all nations to :

- afford high priority to reducing the female illiteracy rate, by resolving the social, economic and ecological problems known to affect literacy, with emphasis on rural, migrant, refugee and

internally displaced women, women with disabilities and those suffering as result of violent conflict.

- provide universal access to, and seek to ensure gender equality in, the completion of primary education for girls, by the year 2015.
- ensure the allocation of sufficient resources to provide for quality programmes and strategies.
- encourage adult and family engagement in learning, to promote total literacy for all people.
- eliminate the gender gap in basic and functional literacy.
- narrow the disparity between developed and developing countries.
- address new challenges and trends, such as teen pregnancy, drug abuse, HIV / A I D S , s a f e motherhood , the environment, tolerance, peace and human rights teaching.
- promote, together with literacy, life skills and scientific and technological knowledge and work towards an expansion of the definition of literacy

Soroptimist International will continue to work with governments, non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations and related UN agencies, locally and internationally, through its many literacy projects, to further the aim of eradicating illiteracy and will monitor the implementation of all commitments, made by government and professional agencies, to this aim.

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### Motherhood, Safe

Soroptimist International is aware that several million women die each year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth and that many more suffer permanent damage to their health. It therefore supports the aims of the Safe Motherhood initiative, which is concerned with this unacceptable level of maternal mortality and morbidity, and with strategies to improve the situation.

Soroptimist International recognises that the Forward Looking Strategies developed as an outcome of the Decade for Women Conference in 1985, the Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Cairo Population Conference, all make a broad range of recommendations on these topics, and repeatedly call for the participation of women, in the World Health Organisation's goal of Health for All by the Year 2000.

It therefore urges all Governments, in respecting and valuing the varied contributions made by women to their nations, to :

- improve national infrastructures so that pregnancy and childbirth become safer
- allocate sufficient resources to maternity services including hospital and community personnel training
- promote education within the extended family, including the men, on the human reproduction system, on methods of contraception and the



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importance of family planning and parenting educate on diet and a healthy lifestyle

- improve access to all forms of health care
- improve rural health facilities
- integrate traditional birth attendants into the regular pattern of pre- and post-natal care
- encourage initiatives by relevant voluntary organisations
- encourage research into causes and possible solutions and into the monitoring of interventions, to identify effective procedures

Sorooptimist International members will work with other non-governmental, voluntary and other organisations, to monitor the implementation of commitments made by governments and professional agencies in these matters. In particular they will support the participation of women at all levels, in the policy making, programme formulation and implementation, in support of the Safe Motherhood initiative.

### Older Person: Rights of the

In recognising 1999 as the United Nations International Year of the Older Person, Sorooptimist International is aware that the ageing community is the fastest growing group in the world. Chronological age is no longer considered a determinant of individual capacity and capability, because people, and more particularly women, are living longer and more productively than ever before. However, although the majority of older persons continue to live vital, healthy lives, within the family, the risk of dependency must increase with age.

Sorooptimist International therefore urges Governments to :

- make urgent plans and provision for this ageing population, including them in the development of policies and programmes, and decisions, on all issues which will affect their lives
- recognise that older persons have a wealth of lifelong experiences and are an untapped resource in society
- offer opportunities for older people to remain integrated in society and to develop new social roles.
- provide appropriate opportunities for work, with adequate pension and social security schemes
- ensure adequate resources to meet basic needs, to be provided by their own income, the family, and community support
- provide health care throughout the life cycle, to help the older person maintain, or return to, an optimum level of physical, mental and emotional, well-being
- support the potential to remain in their own homes, by offering appropriate housing that is able to be adapted to suit their changing needs
- assist in the provision of flexible working arrangements, for those who become the carers of incapacitated, older persons
- improve the working conditions of those who work in the caring professions
- honour the older person's

dignity, by offering security, and protection from exploitation and physical, mental or verbal abuse

- conduct gender specific research, into the health and sociological issues, of the ageing population

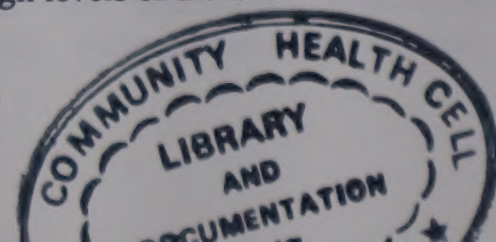
Sorooptimist International will work as partners with governments and civil societies, ensuring the protection of their rights, and supporting investment in, our older persons, as valuable resources to future generations.

### Ozone Layer Depletion

Sorooptimist International is concerned about the depletion of the ozone layer by Chlorofluorocarbon (CFCs) and halon gases and the subsequent risk of damage, to human, animal, and plant life, and to the food chain, from increasing amounts of ultra-violet radiation penetrating the earth's atmosphere.

Sorooptimist International applauds the successful reduction of ozone destroying CFC emissions since 1987, but continues to urge all governments concerned with the manufacture, use, import and export of CFCs and halon gases to :

- continue to respect their commitments
- to provide funds for further research into the effects of ozone layer depletion
- to encourage the development of appropriate alternative technologies to raise public awareness about the danger of the continuing high levels of ultra-violet radiation





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Soroptimist International members will continue to increase their own awareness and that of others, and to work with appropriate agencies to advocate for the respect of government commitments. Its members will apply in their private and professional lives, all the means possible, to help reduce the use of products that destroy the ozone layer and increase ultra-violet radiation.

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### Slavery: Issues of Contemporary

Soroptimist International recognises the definition of contemporary slavery and practices akin to slavery set out in: the Slavery Convention (1953) the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery (1956); the Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others (1949); Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1949) and International Labour Organisation Convention.

Soroptimist International is concerned that, despite the progress made in the protection of human rights and the preservation of human dignity, various forms of slavery still exist all over the world. Although the industrialised countries are not spared, slavery particularly affects the developing countries, and within each country the more vulnerable groups of the population, the majority of whom are women and children. Poverty is often the main cause of slavery-like practices but this does not justify exploitation. Governments should strive to overcome poverty without having recourse to slavery-like practices.

Soroptimist International is particularly concerned for those elements of contemporary slavery

which relate to the traffic in persons, sales of children, child prostitution, prostitution and persons trapped in exploitative working systems. Such activities are incompatible with human rights, human dignity and values; and jeopardize the welfare of individuals, families and society as a whole.

Special attention should be paid to the problem of sex tourism. Soroptimist International urges governments to take legislative and other measures to prevent and combat sex tourism, both in the countries from which the customer comes and the countries to which they go. Marketing tourism through the enticement of sex with children should be penalised on the same level as procurement. Effective enforcement measures must also be directed against all who encourage and make profits from the trafficking in sale and sexual exploitation of all persons.

Soroptimist International urges Governments to give high priority to the ratification of the relevant appropriate international Conventions, passing and enforcement of National legislation to outlaw forced and bonded labour and other exploitative working systems. It is recognised that in many cases such systems are a means of survival for children and their families, the economic and social causes of the persistence of such labour should be addressed in order to offer an alternative that will take vulnerable groups out of the circle of poverty and exploitation.

Soroptimist International calls for concerted action at local, national and international levels to focus attention on problems of exploitation through slavery-like practices.

- by advising and educating

the consumer to purchase only products stating that they have not been made with child labour

- by raising the level of concern over exploitative practices and their consequences for the health, education and development of the people involved.

Soroptimist International believes that further global efforts are required with a view to eliminating all vestiges of slavery in whatever form before the end of the twentieth century.

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### Women: Violence Against

Soroptimist International believes that violence of any kind is an intolerable act, in any situation, other than that of self defence. In particular, Soroptimist International condemns the use and/or threat of all violence against women, in home, community or even in war, believing that acts of violence endanger women physically, mentally, emotionally and economically, perpetuating and reinforcing, unjustifiable inequalities in all aspects of women's lives.

Soroptimist International supports the strategic objectives stated in the Platform for Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, in 1995 and urges governments to do their utmost to secure the safety of girls and women from acts of violence, and to help them overcome the consequences, when violence does occur by:

- ensuring that the agencies of law enforcement have appropriate training in :



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offering appropriate assistance to women who are the victims of domestic violence; patrolling public places and streets, both urban and rural, effectively at all times; responding quickly to calls for assistance against violence

acting with understanding and sympathy in giving assistance

informing women about their legal rights and the sources of help

ensuring that legal services, the judicial system and support services are available, and that these operate speedily and effectively, and where possible, without cost for women who have suffered violence

the provision of assistance to leave the place where violence occurs and, in particular promoting the provision of refuges and safe houses, for women who are victims of domestic violence and their children

providing access to medical and psychological services, counselling and legal aid, at no cost to the victim

providing special refuge and social services for particularly vulnerable women including migrant, disabled and indigenous women

Soroptimist International also urges Governments to take further action designed to overcome the possibility of and/or the effects of violence by:

promoting arrangements to ensure the protection of workers from violence and exploitation in the workplace ensuring that effective arrangements are made to promote the safety, from acts

of violence, to users of public transport

promoting penal systems which combine protection of society, from those who carry out acts of violence, with punishment of the perpetrators and their rehabilitation and education

introducing and enforcing legislation which makes the customs and traditional practices, that violate the rights of women and girls, unlawful

ensuring that all women in prison, or other institutions, are afforded their human rights, protected from acts of violence, and treated with dignity and respect

arranging for the counselling and rehabilitation of the victims of violence (including training and job finding where appropriate)

creating or strengthening mechanisms, so that women and girls can report acts of violence in a safe and confidential environment

supporting gender specific research into the causes of violent behaviour and remedial techniques, disseminating the results and acting upon the recommendations

developing education programmes, which include teaching young people to value men and women equally, and to understand the concept of non-violent resolution of conflicts among themselves raising awareness of the responsibility of the media in promoting

non-stereotyped images of women and men, and eliminating media presentations that generate violence

developing education programmes and legislation, aimed at eliminating trafficking of women and children, child pornography, and sex tourism

Soroptimist International works to reduce violence against women and to help the victims, and advocates co-operation among governments, non-governmental and voluntary organisations in this work.





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